

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANAMA 00397 161536Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4237

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 397

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, BA
SUBJECT: MIDEASTFOR: NEW FORMAT TALKS

REF: MANAMA 244

1. FOREIGN MINISTER RECEIVED ME FEB. 15 FOR FURTHER DISCUSSIONS OF POSSIBLE NEW FORMULA FOR NAVY PRESENCE HERE. AT OUTSET FONMIN REPEATED HIS REQUEST (MANAMA 325) THAT I FULLY ACQUAINT SECRETARY WITH BAHRAIN'S VIEWS ON FUTURE OF MIDEASTFOR AND ASSURE HIM THAT BAHRAIN WANTS TO REMAIN CLOSE TO U.S. AND ITS DESIRE RE NAVY IS FOR "NEW FORMULA". NOT FOR TOTAL SEVERANCE OF NAVY-BAHRAIN RELATIONSHIP.

2. I REVIEWED FOR FONMIN WHERE I BELIEVED OUR LAST DISCUSSION (REFTEL) HAD LEFT US AND HE AGREED THAT CHIEF POINT WAS OUR INFORMAL AGREEMENT RE DE-HOMEPORTING OF FLAGSHIP AND ADMIRAL/STAFF. HE SAID THIS WOULD BE KEY TO GOB'S ABILITY CREDIBLY TO STATE THAT BAHRAIN NO LONGER HOSTED SUPER POWER BASE. FONMIN EXPANDED ON THIS POINT, REPEATING AGAIN THAT IF NEW FORMULA PERMITS GOB TO SAY THAT BAHRAIN IS NO LONGER HEADQUARTERS OF MIDDLE EAST FORCE, THEN CONTINUED USE OF OTHER FACILITIES OUGHT TO BE POSSIBLE TO ARRANGE BETWEEN US.

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3. ON THIS OCCASION FONMIN RESISTED GETTING INTO GREAT DETAIL ON OTHER ASPECTS OF FUTURE NAVY USE OF FACILITIES HERE. HE SAID HE FIRST WOULD PREFER TO HEAR WHAT I HAD TO SAY AFTER RIYADH, AGAIN INDICATING HIS DESIRE TO HEAR THAT COURSE WE ARE ON -- NEGOTIATING A NEW FORMAT -- IS APPROVED BY NEW TEAM.

4. I DID ENGAGE HIM BRIEFLY ON LOGISTIC ASPECTS. POINTING OUT NAVY'S DESIRE TO RETAIN HERE SUPPLY PERSONNEL AND FACILITIES TO RECEIVE AND DISPENSE TO SHIPS SUPPLIES RECEIVED BY AIR. I NOTED THAT SOME RESUPPLY ALREADY CARRIED OUT AT OTHER PORTS WHICH MIDEASTFOR SHIPS VISIT BUT THAT EXCELLENCE AND CONVENIENCE OF EXISTING FACILITIES HERE MADE THEIR RETENTION A KEY POINT IN OUR EMERGING IMAGE OF WORKABLE NEW FORMULA.

5. FONMIN ASKED HOW MANY PEOPLE NAVY WOULD WANT TO KEEP ON SHORE HERE. I SAID THIS WAS BEING WORKED OUT IN DETAIL NOW AND I WOULD INFORM HIM. I ADDED THAT, AS HE KNEW AND HAD AGREED, BAHRAIN SCHOOL CONTINUING UNDER DOD AUSPICE WOULD REQUIRE SOME DOD PERSONNEL FOR LOGISTICS/ADMIN SUPPORT AND I PRESUMED THAT, AS IS NOW THE CASE, SAME PEOPLE AND FACILITIES COULD BE USED TO SUPPORT BOTH SCHOOL AND NAVY LOGISTICS.

6. COMMENT: THOUGH FONMIN CLEARLY WANTS TO HEAR THAT NEW TEAM INDEED INTERESTED IN CONTINUING NAVAL PRESENCE IN THIS REGION, HIS SUSPICION THAT THIS MIGHT NOT BE THE CASE APPARENTLY HAS BEEN REDUCED SOMEWHAT BY PRESENCE IN THIS PART OF WORLD OF USS ENTERPRISE, ABOUT WHICH HE EXPRESSED INTEREST. HE ALSO NOTED APPOINTMENT OF A NAVY MAN, ADMIRAL TURNER, AS CIA DIRECTOR AND WONDERED IF ANOTHER CLASSMATE OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S, MIDEASTFOR COMMANDER REAR ADMIRAL CROWE, MIGHT NOT ALSO BECOME MORE IMPORTANT IN FUTURE.

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